

Riding in Traffic - Safely

Riding in traffic is not as hard as it looks if you follow the suggestions below. In *Effective Cycling*, John Forester writes, "Cyclists fare best when they act and are treated as drivers of vehicles."

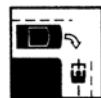
Be predictable

Ride so drivers can see you and predict your movements



Obey all regulatory signs and traffic lights

Bicyclists must follow the same rules of the road as drivers of other vehicles.



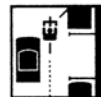
Never ride against traffic

Motorists aren't looking for bicyclists riding on the wrong side of the road or on the sidewalk. Ride with traffic.



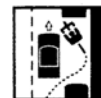
Use hand signals

Hand signals tell motorists what you intend to do. Signal as a matter of law, courtesy and self protection.



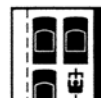
Ride in a straight line

Whenever possible, ride in a straight line to the right of traffic and about a car door width away from parked cars.



Don't weave between parked cars

Don't ride out to the curb between parked cars unless they are far apart. Motorists may not see you when you try to move back into traffic.



Take the lane in slow traffic

Ride in the middle of the lane whenever you are moving at the same speed as traffic.



Choose the best way to turn left

There are two ways to make a left turn:

(1) Like an auto. Look behind, signal, move into the left lane and turn left. (2) Like a pedestrian. Ride straight to the far-side crosswalk. Walk your bike across.

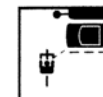


Avoid or go slow on sidewalks

Pedestrians have the right of way on walkways. By law, you must give pedestrians audible warning when you pass. Bicyclists are not allowed on sidewalks in certain areas. (see page Employee-4)

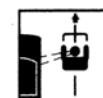
Be alert

Ride defensively, watch the traffic, and be prepared to react.



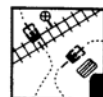
Watch for cars pulling out

Make eye contact with drivers. Assume they don't see you until you are sure they do.



Scan the road behind you

Learn to look back over your shoulder without losing your balance or swerving left. Some riders use rear-view mirrors.



Avoid road hazards

Watch out for parallel-slatted sewer grates, slippery man-hole covers, oily pavement, gravel, pot holes, ice. Cross railroad tracks carefully at right angles. For better control as you move across bumps and other hazards, stand up on your pedals.



Keep both hands ready to brake

You may not stop in time if you brake one-handed. Allow extra distance for stopping in the rain, since brakes are less efficient when wet.

Be equipped



Wear a helmet

Always wear a helmet when ever you ride a bicycle. Helmets dramatically reduce the risk of head injury in a bicycle accident.



Use lights at night

Always use a strong head light and tail light at night and when visibility is poor.

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For more bicycle safety information, see "Street Smarts: Bicycling's Traffic Survival Guide" by *Bicycling Magazine*. Call WABA for a copy: (202) 628-2500.

Trail Etiquette

- Stay to the right except when passing.
- Travel at a reasonable speed in a consistent and predictable manner.
- Always look ahead and behind before passing.
- Pass slower traffic on the left; yield to oncoming traffic when passing.
- Give a clear warning signal before passing (ring bell and say "passing on the left").
- Move off the trail when stopped to allow others to room to pass.
- Yield to other users when entering and crossing the trail.
- Use a light and reflectors after dusk and before dawn; most trails are not lit.

Effective Cycling. One of the best ways to learn how to be safe and confident while cycling in traffic is to take an Effective Cycling Course, administered by the League of American Bicyclists. There is a three-hour class designed specifically for bicycle commuting. Call WABA, (202) 628-2500, or the League of American Bicyclists, (202) 822-1333, for more information on Effective Cycling in the Washington area.